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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2017

TAGS: PHUM PREL TH BM

SUBJECT: BURMA SUMMIT PARTICIPATION DEMARCHE DELIVERED;
ISSUES WITH WHITE HOUSE INVITATION

REF: STATE 148530

Classified By: Ambassador Ralph L. Boyce, reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Ambassador delivered reftel demarche to MFA Permsec Virasakdi Futrukul on October 26. (Foreign Minister was unavailable due to impending travel.) Virsaksi had no immediate official reaction. Speaking personally, however, he cautioned that this ASEAN-wide demarche could elicit an adverse reaction. Virasakdi based this concern on his recent meetings in Singapore, attending the ASEAN SOM. At this meeting, senior officials discussed the White House invitation to ASEAN leaders. Virasakdi said that there was a "hostile atmosphere" toward the invitation because it put conditions on ASEAN (as the invitation excludes the Burmese leadership.) Virasakdi added that this had nothing to do with support for Burma; the ASEAN officials were simply adverse to another country imposing conditions on them. Virasakdi speculated that this "hostile atmosphere" might extend to this latest US demarche as well.

¶2. (C) Clarifying his comments on the White House invitation to ASEAN leaders, Virasakdi noted that there was as yet no official response to the invitation. Singapore, as ASEAN Chair, would have to check with senior levels in each member state before ASEAN had an official position.

¶3. (C) COMMENT: We appreciate Virasakdi's efforts to give us some insight into the mindset of ASEAN country officials at this time, and recognize that we have to take into account the ASEAN's unhappiness over our insistence that they have to do more. Nevertheless, we will encourage our interlocutors to respond to our reasonable points in a reasoned fashion.
BOYCE